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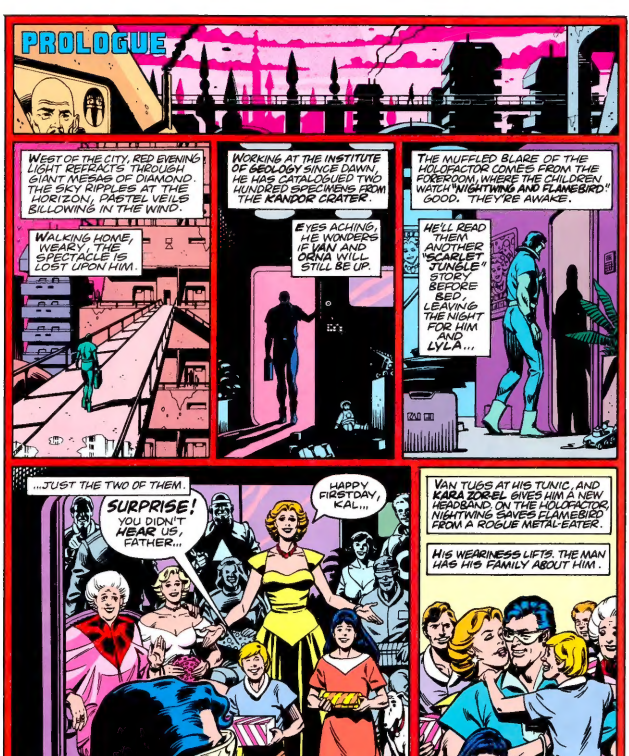
BY ALAN MOORE & DAVE GIBBONS



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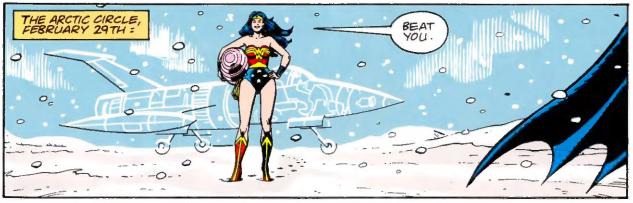
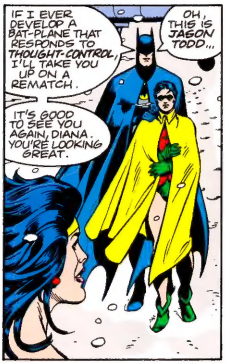
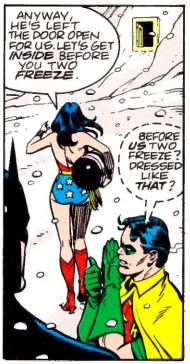
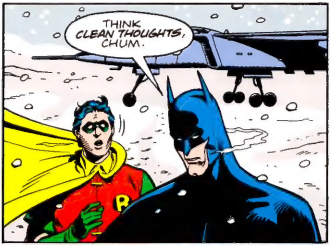
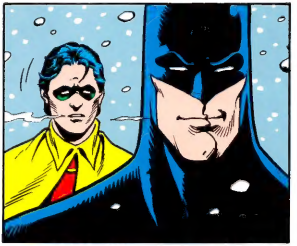

THE ARCTIC CIRCLE, FEBRUARY 29TH:
BEAT YOU.

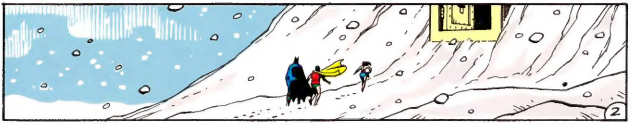

IF I EVER DEVELOP A BAT-PLANE THAT RESPONDS TO THOUGHT-CONTROL, I'LL TAKE YOU UP ON A REMATCH.
OH, THIS IS JASON TODD...
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, DIANA. YOU'RE LOOKING GREAT.

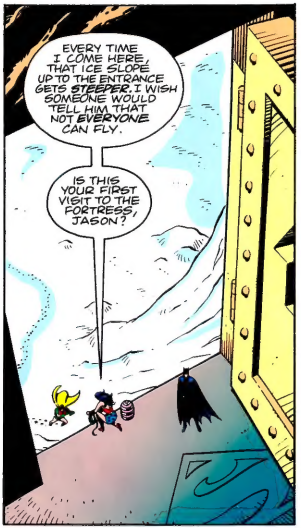
OH, OF COURSE, THE NEW ROBIN. I'M SORRY, JASON ... YOU LOOK SO MUCH LIKE DICK THAT I FORGOT FOR A MOMENT...
NICE TO MEET YOU. WELCOME TO AN INTERESTING CAREER.


ANYWAY, HE'S LEFT THE DOOR OPEN FOR US. LET'S GET INSIDE BEFORE YOU TWO FREEZE.
BEFORE US TWO FREEZE? DRESSED LIKE THAT?


THINK CLEAN THOUGHTS, CHUM.

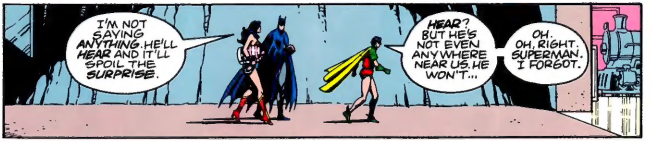


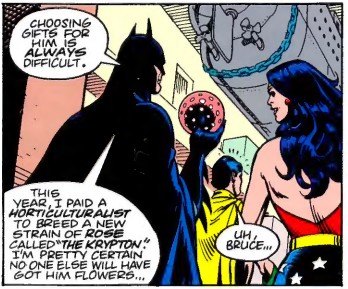


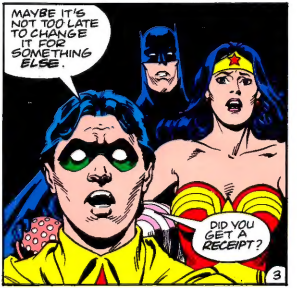

EVERY TIME I COME HERE, THAT ICE SLOPE UP TO THE ENTRANCE GETS STEEPER. I WISH SOMEONE WOULD TELL HIM THAT NOT EVERYONE CAN FLY.
IS THIS YOUR FIRST VISIT TO THE FORTRESS, JASON?

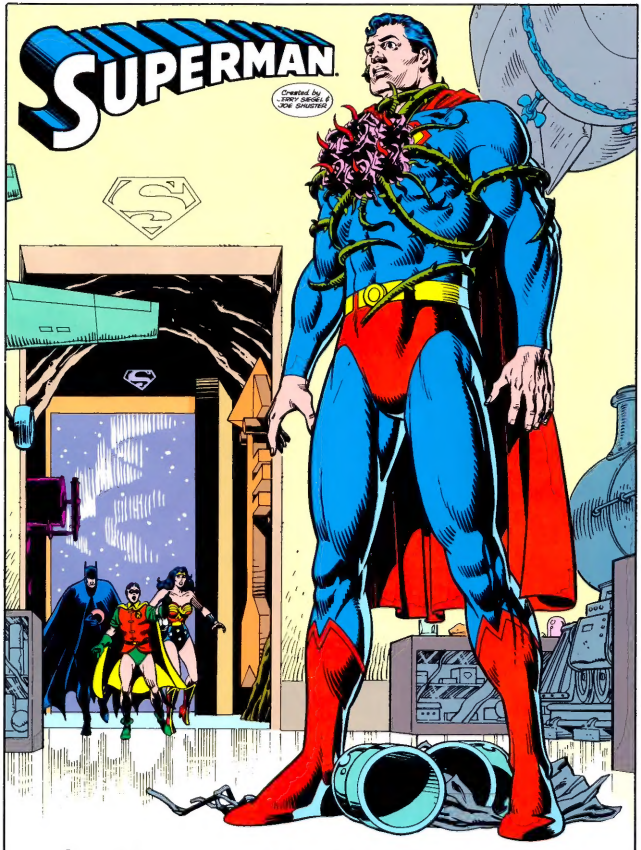
UH, YEAH.
I MEAN, I MET SUPERMAN BEFORE, BUT I STILL DON'T REALLY, UH, KNOW HIM THAT WELL.
THIS IS A BIG PLACE, ISN'T IT? I BET THERE'S SOME SCARY STUFF IN HERE...

WELL, IF YOU MAKE A PROFESSION OUT OF THAT MASK, YOU'LL PROBABLY SEE A LOT WORSE.
INCIDENTALLY, DIANA, WHAT KIND OF PRESENT DID YOU DECIDE TO GET HIM?


I'M NOT SAYING ANYTHING. HE'LL HEAR AND IT'LL SPOIL THE SURPRISE.
HEAR? BUT HE'S NOT EVEN ANYWHERE NEAR US. HE WON'T...
OH. OH, RIGHT. SUPERMAN. I FORGOT.

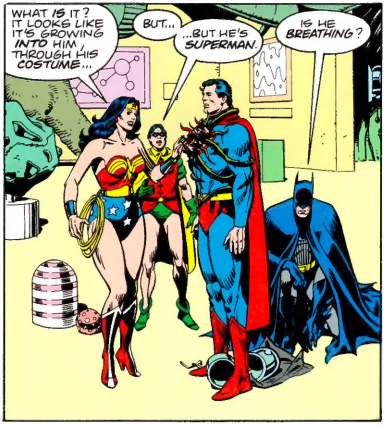

CHOOSING GIFTS FOR HIM IS ALWAYS DIFFICULT.
THIS YEAR, I PAID A HORTICULTURALIST TO BREED A NEW STRAIN OF ROSE CALLED "THE KRYPTON." I'M PRETTY CERTAIN NO ONE ELSE WILL HAVE GOT HIM FLOWERS...
UH, BRUCE...


MAYBE IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO CHANGE IT FOR SOMETHING ELSE.
DID YOU GET A RECEIPT?



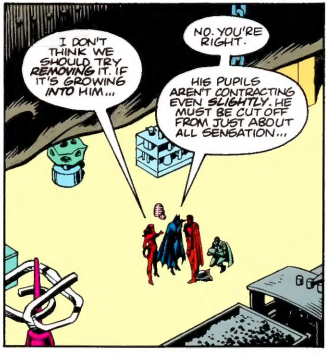
For The Man Who Has Everything...

ALAN MOORE: WRITER | DAVE GIBBONS: ARTIST & LETTERER | TOM ZIUKO: COLORIST | JULIUS SCHWARTZ: EDITOR

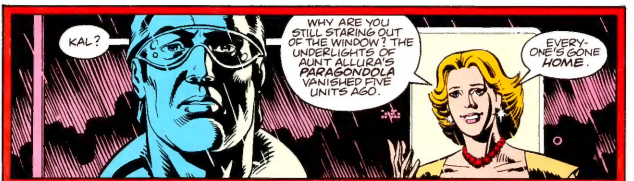

WHAT IS IT? IT LOOKS LIKE IT'S GROWING INTO HIM THROUGH HIS COSTUME...
BUT...
...BUT HE'S SUPERMAN!
IS HE BREATHING?

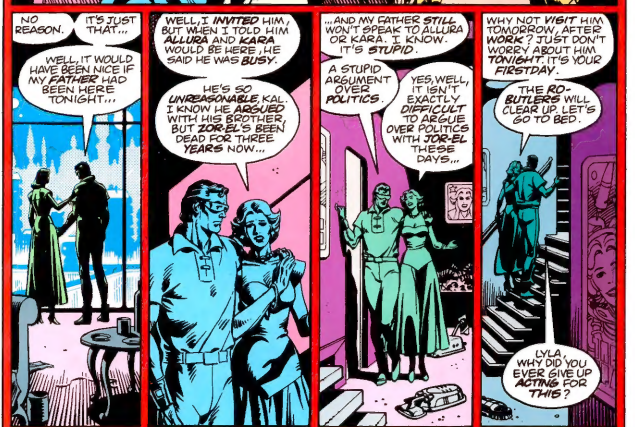
YES. YES, BUT VERY FAINTLY.
BRUCE, THIS THING FEELS FUNNY. I THINK IT MIGHT HAVE SOME MAGIC IN IT...
IF IT'S GROWING THROUGH THE COSTUME, THAT WOULD MAKE SENSE. IT LOOKS LIKE HE WAS OPENING A GIFT...

BRUCE, LISTEN. IF SOMETHING'S DONE THIS TO SUPERMAN...
...THEN WE HAVE TO FIND OUT WHAT IT IS AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE WITHOUT WASTING TIME WORRYING.
CHECK THOSE WRAPPINGS THOROUGHLY ... AND BE CAREFUL.

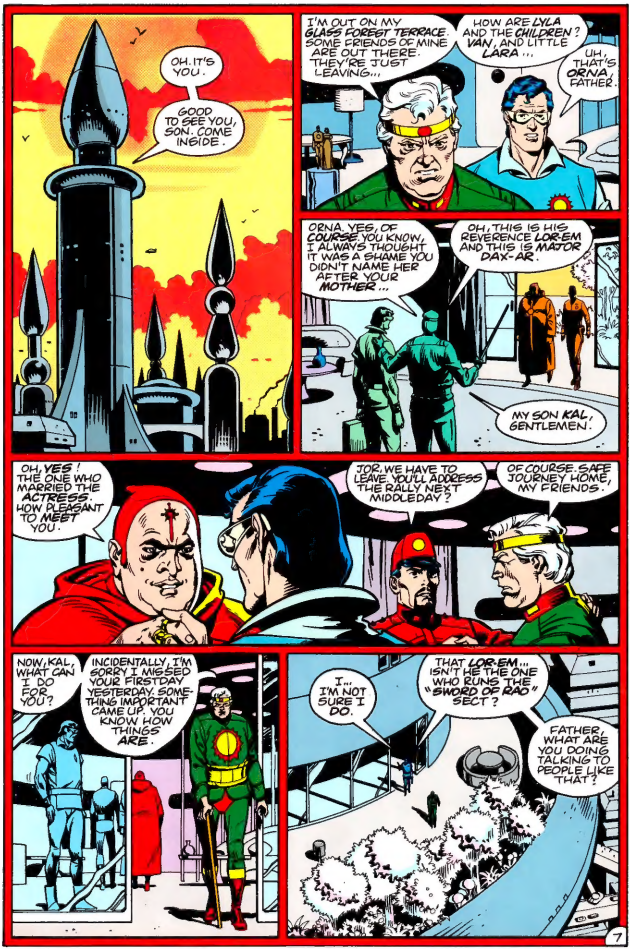

I DON'T THINK WE SHOULD TRY REMOVING IT. IF IT'S GROWING INTO HIM...
NO. YOU'RE RIGHT.
HIS PUPILS AREN'T CONTRACTING EVEN SLIGHTLY. HE MUST BE CUT OFF FROM JUST ABOUT ALL SENSATION...

HE'S IN A WORLD OF HIS OWN.


KAL?
WHY ARE YOU STILL STARING OUT OF THE WINDOW? THE UNDERLIGHTS OF AUNT ALLURA'S PARASONDOLA VANISHED FIVE UNITS AGO.
EVERYONE'S GONE HOME.


NO REASON.
IT'S JUST THAT...
WELL, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN NICE IF MY FATHER HAD BEEN HERE TONIGHT...
WELL, I INVITED HIM, BUT WHEN I TOLD HIM ALLURA AND KARA WOULD BE HERE, HE SAID HE WAS BUSY.
HE'S SO UNREASONABLE, KAL. I KNOW HE ARGUED WITH HIS BROTHER, BUT ZOR-EL'S BEEN DEAD FOR THREE YEARS NOW...
...AND MY FATHER STILL WON'T SPEAK TO ALLURA OR KARA. I KNOW. IT'S STUPID.
A STUPID ARGUMENT OVER POLITICS.
YES, WELL, IT ISN'T EXACTLY DIFFICULT TO ARGUE OVER POLITICS WITH JOR-EL THESE DAYS...
WHY NOT VISIT HIM TOMORROW, AFTER WORK? JUST DON'T WORRY ABOUT HIM TONIGHT. IT'S YOUR FIRSTDAY.
THE ROBUTLERS WILL CLEAR UP. LET'S GO TO BED.
LYLA, WHY DID YOU EVER GIVE UP ACTING FOR THIS?

I DON'T KNOW, KAL.
REMIND ME.


OH, IT'S YOU.
GOOD TO SEE YOU, SON. COME INSIDE.
I'M OUT ON MY GLASS FOREST TERRACE. SOME FRIENDS OF MINE ARE OUT THERE. THEY'RE JUST LEAVING...
HOW ARE LYLA AND THE CHILDREN? VAY, AND LITTLE LARA...
UH, THAT'S ORNA FATHER.
ORNA. YES, OF COURSE. YOU KNOW, I ALWAYS THOUGHT IT WAS A SHAME YOU DIDN'T NAME HER AFTER YOUR MOTHER...
OH, THIS IS HIS REVERENCE LOR-EM AND THIS IS MAJOR DAX-AR.
MY SON KAL, GENTLEMEN.
OH, YES! THE ONE WHO MARRIED THE ACTRESS. HOW PLEASANT TO MEET YOU.
JOR, WE HAVE TO LEAVE. YOU'LL ADDRESS THE RALLY NEXT MIDDLEDAY?
OF COURSE. SAFE JOURNEY HOME, MY FRIENDS.
NOW, KAL, WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?
INCIDENTALLY, I'M SORRY I MISSED YOUR FIRSTDAY YESTERDAY. SOMETHING IMPORTANT CAME UP. YOU KNOW HOW THINGS ARE.
I... I'M NOT SURE I DO.
THAT LOR-EM... ISN'T HE THE ONE WHO RUNS THE "SWORD OF RAO" SECT?
FATHER, WHAT ARE YOU DOING TALKING TO PEOPLE LIKE THAT?

KAL, LOR-EM HAS A LOT OF PEOPLE BEHIND HIM. PEOPLE WITH INFLUENCE.

IF THE OLD KRYPTON MOVEMENT IS TO HAVE ANY POLITICAL STRENGTH IN THE CHAMBERS...

OLD KRYPTON MOVEMENT? YOU'RE REALLY GOING THROUGH WITH THAT?

SOMEONE HAS TO.

LOOK AROUND YOU, KAL. WHAT'S HAPPENED TO KRYPTON? THERE'S THE DRUG TRAFFIC IN GLAMOR-SALTS AND HELLBLOSSOM COMING IN FROM ERKOL...

THERE'S RACIAL TROUBLE WITH THE VATHLO ISLAND IMMIGRANTS...

FATHER, KRYPTON IS CHANGING, AND THE CHANGE IS DIFFICULT. EXTREMIST POLITICAL GROUPS AREN'T MAKING IT ANY EASIER...

...AND GRUBBING FOR ROCKS IN THE KANDOR CRATER IS, I SUPPOSE?

I HAD GREAT HOPES FOR YOU, KAL...

THAT ISN'T FAIR...

WELL? WHEN HAS ANYONE EVER BEEN FAIR TO ME? WAS IT FAIR THAT I WAS FORCED TO RESIGN FROM THE SCIENCE COUNCIL?

WAS IT FAIR THAT THE EATING SICKNESS TOOK YOUR MOTHER?

THAT WAS TWENTY YEARS AGO. I KNOW THE SCIENCE COUNCIL TREATED YOU BADLY, BUT...

BADLY? THEY IMPLIED THAT I WAS INSANE!

ALL RIGHT, SO MY THEORY WAS INCORRECT. I BELIEVED KRYPTON WAS DOOMED AND I WAS WRONG...

DOES THAT GIVE THEM THE RIGHT TO PUSH ME ASIDE, AND LET SOCIETY FALL TO PIECES?

YOU KNOW, I HEAR THEY'RE CAMPAIGNING TO RELEASE THE PHANTOM ZONE CRIMINALS "UNREASONABLY SEVERE PUNISHMENT," THEY CALL IT...

FATHER...

SOMETIMES, I THINK YOU WISH YOU WERE RIGHT.
I THINK YOU WISH KRYPTON HAD EXPLODED AFTER ALL.
I HAVE TO GO NOW.
CHRILLSSSSH
"REALLY, IT'S JUST A MATTER OF PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER..."

...EXCEPT FOR ONE OR TWO MINOR DETAILS.

FIRSTLY, I KNEW PRECISELY WHAT IT WOULD DO TO HIM.

SECONDLY, IT WAS NOT INTENDED AS A TOKEN OF GRATITUDE.

WHAT IS IT?

I DON'T KNOW. START TO MOVE AWAY SLOWLY. PERHAPS WE CAN PLAY FOR TIME...

UH, WHAT EXACTLY IS THAT CREATURE?

DO YOU LIKE IT?

IT'S CALLED A "BLACK MERCY." I TRAVELED A GREAT WAY INTO THE TANGLED ZONES TO LOCATE IT.

...OH, AND PLEASE TELL THE LITTLE YELLOW CREATURE TO STOP SHUFFLING. IT DISTRACTS ME.

IT'S SOMETHING BETWEEN A PLANT AND AN INTELLIGENT FUNGUS. IT ATTACHES ITSELF TO ITS VICTIMS IN A FORM OF SYMBIOSIS, FEEDING FROM THEIR BIO-AURA.

AND WHAT DOES IT DO FOR THEM IN RETURN?

WHY, IT GIVES THEM THEIR HEART'S DESIRE.

I'D SAY THAT WAS FAIR, WOULDN'T YOU?

IT'S TELEPATHIC. IT READS THEM LIKE A BOOK, AND IT FEEDS THEM A LOGICAL SIMULATION OF THE HAPPY ENDING THEY DESIRE.

OF COURSE, ITS VICTIMS COULD SHRUG IT OFF...

THEY JUST DON'T WANT TO.

I DELIVERED IT TO HIM, AND WHEN I WAS CERTAIN THAT IT HAD DONE ITS WORK, I FOLLOWED IT ALONG THE TELEPORTATION CHANNEL.

POOR LITTLE CREATURE, I WONDER WHERE HE THINKS HE IS?

PERHAPS HE'S PLAYING HAPPILY AS A CHILD IN WHATEVER SORDID ABORIGINAL BACK-WATER HE WAS RAISED IN, OR BOUNCING ON HIS MOTHER'S KNEE...

THAT WOULD BE NICE, WOULDN'T IT? TO THINK OF HIM, CAREFREE AND CONTENTED...

FOREVER.

WHAT... ARE... YOU?

IF YOU DON'T ALREADY KNOW MY NAME, THEN YOU'RE NOT WORTHY OF AN INTRODUCTION.

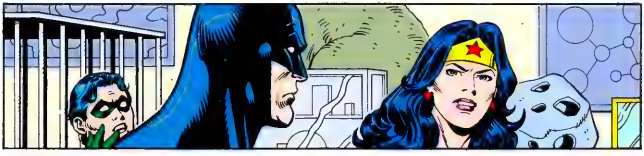
I'M THE NEW MANAGER AROUND HERE.

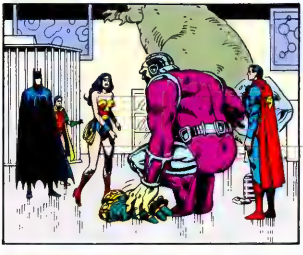
NATURALLY, I SHALL NEED TIME TO SETTLE IN AND ADJUST TO YOUR MANY INTERESTING CUSTOMS...

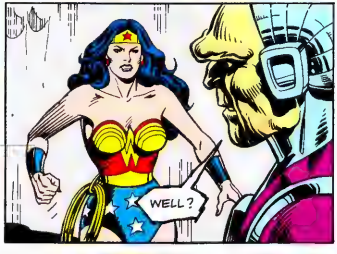
I KNOW, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT YOUR SOCIETY MAKES DISTINCTIONS ON A BASIS OF GENDER AND AGE.

PERHAPS, THEN, YOU COULD ADVISE ME...

WHICH OF YOU WOULD IT BE POLITE TO KILL FIRST?






WELL?

THRUTCH

HMM...
AAAK...

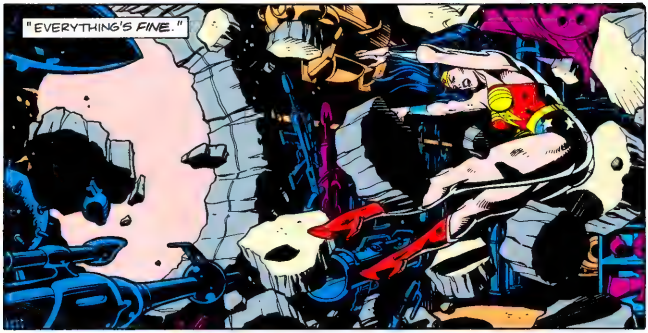
THANK YOU.
I THINK THAT'S ANSWERED MY QUESTION.

I ASKED YOU A QUESTION!
WHY WON'T ANYBODY ANSWER ME?
WIDOW ZOR-EL, PLEASE...
AUNT ALLURA?
I GOT THE MESSAGE YOU LEFT ON MY CALL-CUBE AND CAME STRAIGHT AWAY. I WAS LOOKING AFTER IVAN, SO I'M AFRAID I HAD TO BRING...
OH, KAL! KAL, SHE'S...
WIDOW ZOR-EL PLEASE, COME THIS WAY. YOU CAN SEE YOUR DAUGHTER IN A MOMENT...
KARA?
SOMETHING'S HAPPENED TO KARA? WHAT'S GOING ON?
YOU'RE KAL-EL? THE GIRL'S COUSIN?
YES. BUT...
I'M AFRAID KARA ZOR-EL WAS ATTACKED EARLIER THIS EVENING BY SOME RIOTERS ARMED WITH SLASH-STICKS. SHE'S CRITICAL.
FATHER? FATHER, DID AUNT ALLURA HURT HERSELF? SHE WAS CRYING...
BUT ...BUT WHY?
THEY FOUND THIS.
IT WAS TIED AROUND HER NECK...
FATHER?

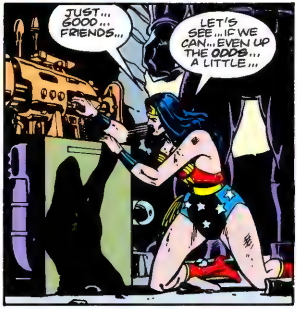
"JAX-UR: MORE THAN TWENTY YEARS IN LIMBO ...JUST BECAUSE IT DOESN'T HURT, THAT DOESN'T MEAN IT ISN'T TORTURE...FREE PHANTOM ZONE EXILES NOW..."
I--I'VE SEEN THESE THINGS AROUND, BUT...
THE ANTI-PHANTOM ZONE CAMPAIGNERS SEE THE PHANTOM ZONE RAY AS AN INSTRUMENT OF TORTURE. YOUR FATHER INVENTED IT.
THAT MAKES THE HOUSE OF EL UNPOPULAR IN CERTAIN QUARTERS, AS YOUR COUSIN DISCOVERED.
SHE'S THROUGH HERE. PERHAPS, NURSE, YOU COULD ENTERTAIN THE CHILD...?
OF COURSE.
HELLO. MY NAME'S ANSULA. WHAT'S YOURS?
VAN.
VAN-EL.
KARA?
PLEASE... ONLY A FEW MOMENTS. SHE'S VERY WEAK...

...SO THEN, WHAT DOES NIGHTWING DO TO METALGIANT AFTER HE HITS FLAMEBIRD?
HE BREAKS ALL HIS ARMS OFF!
"AAAARGH! MERCY..."
WELL, THEN, METALGIANT CONVERTS INTO A TRUNDLE-GUN AND...
FATHER!
LOOK WHAT ANSULA GAVE ME! SHE SAID I COULD KEEP IT!
THAT'S, THAT'S NICE, VAN.
LISTEN, I HAVE TO CALL YOUR MOTHER. I WON'T BE LONG...
HELLO, KAL?
WHAT'S HAPPENING? YOU'RE AT THE HOSPITAL. IT ISN'T VAN, IS IT...?
NO, VAN'S WITH ME. HE'S FINE. IT'S KARA...
SHE'S BEEN ATTACKED...ANTI-PHANTOM ZONE CAMPAIGNERS WITH A GRUDGE AGAINST THE HOUSE OF EL.
LYLA, I THINK I'D BE SAFER IF WE TOOK THE CHILDREN TO YOUR PARENTS IN ATOMIC TOWN FOR A WHILE...
WHAT ABOUT ALLURA?
ALLURA'S STAYING AT THE HOSPITAL WITH KARA. THEY'LL BE SAFE HERE.
CAN YOU AND ORNA TAKE THE PARAGONDOLA STRAIGHT TO ATOMIC TOWN? VAN AND I HAVE THE FLOATER. WE'LL MEET YOU THERE.
I LOVE YOU, LYLA. YOU TOO, ORNA. I'LL SEE YOU IN ATOM!--
PLEASE DEPOSIT TWO DRILS FOR THE NEXT FIVE UNITS.
OH, KAL...

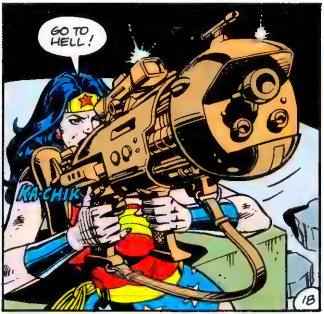
"PLEASE TAKE CARE."
FATHER, WHERE ARE WE GOING? IT'S DARK...
WE'RE GOING ON A VACATION, VAN. WE'RE GOING TO VISIT YOUR GRANDFATHER...
NOT GRAND-FATHER JOR-EL?
UH... NO. NO, WE'RE GOING TO SEE GRANDFATHER LER-ROL AND GRANDMOTHER MARIS IN ATOMIC TOWN...
OH. THAT'S ALL RIGHT, THEN!
LISTEN, I'LL TAKE THE FLOATER CROSS-CITY TO THE WESTERN EXIT. WE CAN CUT THROUGH LITTLE VATHLO AND OVER THE FORT ROZZ PLAZA...
FATHER, THAT JUSTICE OFFICER IS FLASHING TO US...
UH, WHAT EXACTLY IS THE TROUBLE?
DIVERSION. THERE'S A BIG TORCH-PROCESSION OF THOSE SWORD OF RAO CHARACTERS COMING THROUGH HERE.
PART OF THE OLD KRYPTON RALLY.
OLD KRYPTON...?
OH, NO.
FATHER? WHAT'S HAPPENING?
THAT?
OH, IT'S JUST LIKE A CIRCUS PARADE...
NOTHING'S HAPPENING, VAN.

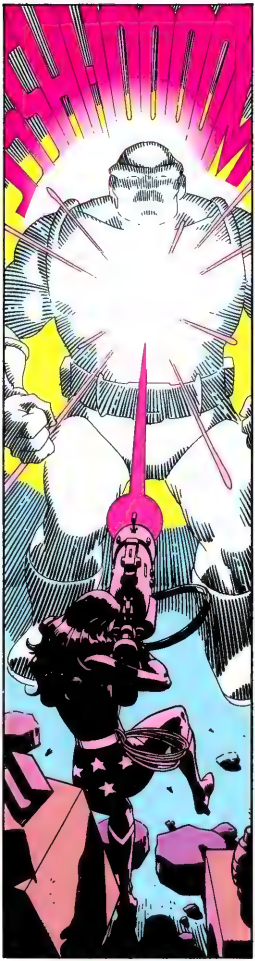

"EVERYTHING'S FINE."

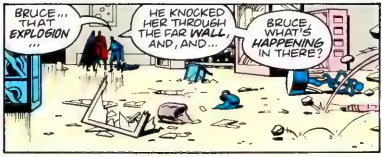
WELL, YOU'RE CERTAINLY LASTING LONGER THAN I ANTICIPATED.
YOU'RE A FEMALE I THINK. YOU WOULDN'T BE THE KRYPTONIAN'S MATE, BY ANY CHANCE?

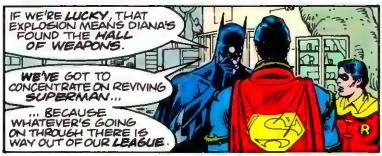

JUST... GOOD... FRIENDS...
LET'S SEE... IF WE CAN... EVEN UP THE ODDS... A LITTLE...

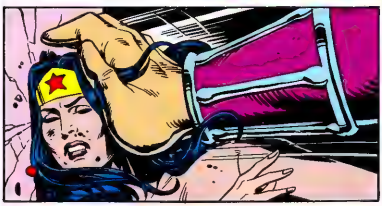
OH, DEAR. IS THAT A NEURAL IMPACTER? DO THEY STILL MAKE THOSE?
I'D ADVISE YOU TO TRY THE PLASM DISRUPTER. IT'S SMALLER.
MORE OF A FEMALE'S WEAPON.

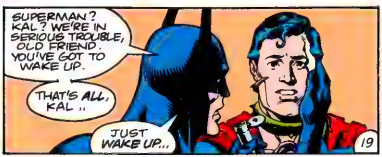

GO TO HELL!
KA-CHIK!



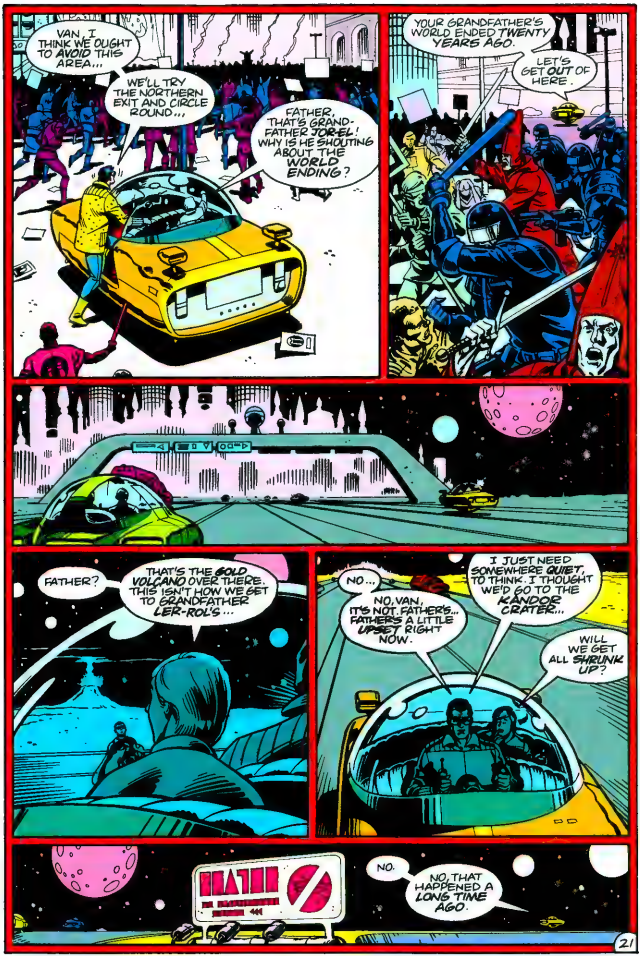

BRUCE... THAT EXPLOSION ...
HE KNOCKED HER THROUGH THE FAR WALL, AND, AND...
BRUCE, WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THERE?

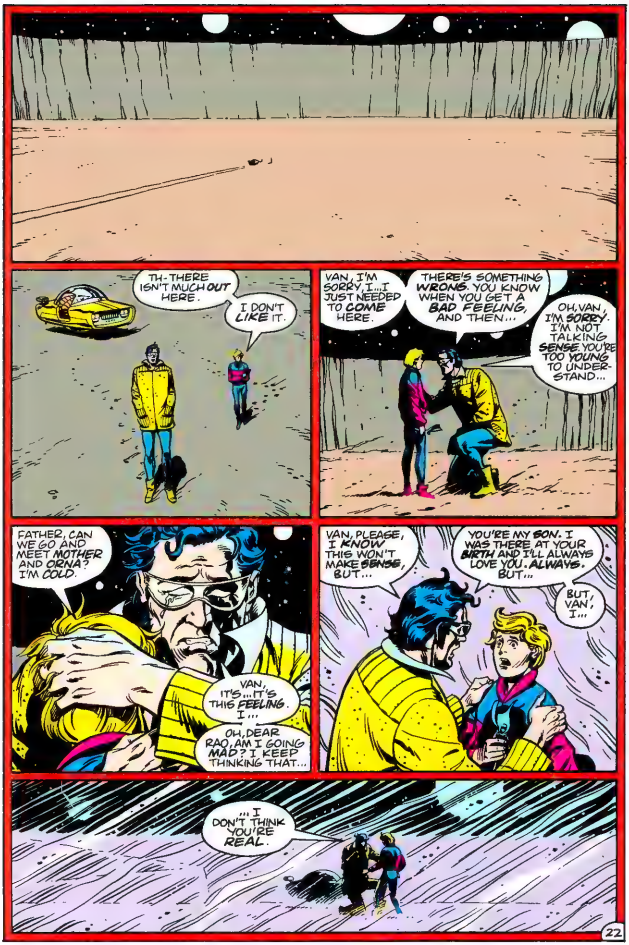

IF WE'RE LUCKY, THAT EXPLOSION MEANS DIANA'S FOUND THE HALL OF WEAPONS.
WE'VE GOT TO CONCENTRATE ON REVIVING SUPERMAN...
... BECAUSE WHATEVER'S GOING ON THROUGH THERE IS WAY OUT OF OUR LEAGUE.




SUPERMAN? KAL? WE'RE IN SERIOUS TROUBLE, OLD FRIEND. YOU'VE GOT TO WAKE UP.
THAT'S ALL, KAL...
JUST WAKE UP...

WAKE UP, KRYPTON, TO THE DANGER THAT FACES YOU...
EXCUSE ME? CAN I GET MY FLOATER THROUGH HERE, PLEASE?
YOU'LL HAVE TO TAKE ANOTHER ROUTE, BROTHER.
THE DIVINE LOR-EM HAS JUST INTRODUCED OUR CHAIR-MAN.
WAKE UP TO THE ROT THAT INFECTS YOUR CITIES...
CHAIRMAN?
WAKE UP TO THE CARNAGE THAT IS ALMOST UPON YOU!
I ONCE KNEW A KRYPTON THAT WAS NOBLE AND UNSPOILED, WHERE PROUD TOWERS ROSE UP AGAINST AN UNTAINTED SKY...
... AND NOW, TODAY, I SEE THAT SPLENDOR THREATENED WITH DESTRUCTION!
WHAT SORT OF CATASTROPHE IS IT GOING TO BE THIS TIME, JOR-EL?
IS THE PLANET BLOWING UP AGAIN? OR IS IT GOING TO BE FLOODS AND PLAGUES?
YOU FANATIC! YOU TORTURER!
YOU WILL NOT DISRUPT THE SACRED TRANQUILLITY OF OUR GATHERING...
REK? REK, HE'S HURTING ME...
LEAVE HER ALONE! WHAT IS THIS?
20


VAN, I THINK WE OUGHT TO AVOID THIS AREA...
WE'LL TRY THE NORTHERN EXIT AND CIRCLE ROUND...
FATHER, THAT'S GRANDFATHER JOREL! WHY IS HE SHOUTING ABOUT THE WORLD ENDING?
YOUR GRANDFATHER'S WORLD ENDED TWENTY YEARS AGO.
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE.
FATHER?
THAT'S THE GOLD VOLCANO OVER THERE. THIS ISN'T HOW WE GET TO GRANDFATHER LER-ROL'S...
NO...
NO, VAN, IT'S NOT FATHER'S... FATHER'S A LITTLE UPSET RIGHT NOW.
I JUST NEED SOMEWHERE QUIET, TO THINK. I THOUGHT WE'D GO TO THE KANDOR CRATER...
WILL WE GET ALL SHRUNK UP?
NO.
NO, THAT HAPPENED A LONG TIME AGO.


TH-THERE ISN'T MUCH OUT HERE.
I DON'T LIKE IT.
VAN, I'M SORRY, I...I JUST NEEDED TO COME HERE.
THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG. YOU KNOW WHEN YOU GET A BAD FEELING, AND THEN...
OH, VAN, I'M SORRY I'M NOT TALKING SENSE. YOU'RE TOO YOUNG TO UNDERSTAND...
FATHER, CAN WE GO AND MEET MOTHER AND ORNA? I'M COLD.
VAN, IT'S...IT'S THIS FEELING. I...
OH, DEAR RAO, AM I GOING MAD? I KEEP THINKING THAT...
VAN, PLEASE, I KNOW THIS WON'T MAKE SENSE, BUT...
YOU'RE MY SON. I WAS THERE AT YOUR BIRTH AND I'LL ALWAYS LOVE YOU. ALWAYS. BUT...
BUT, VAN, I...
...I DON'T THINK YOU'RE REAL.

HIS EYES ARE STARTING TO WATER AND I THINK I JUST FELT IT GIVE A LITTLE. MAYBE HE'S FIGHTING IT.

GET ME THOSE GLOVES THAT THE BIG CREATURE HANDLED IT WITH EARLIER...

ONE OF THE COILS IS LOOSE. IT'S SLACKENING ITS GRIP ON HIM...

BRUCE, I'VE GOT THE GAUNTLETS...

FORGET THE GAUNTLETS...

I THINK IT'S COMING...

FATHER, I'M SCARED! YOU'RE TALKING FUNNY...

BUT DON'T YOU SEE? IT'S ALL WRONG. KRYPTON SHOULDN'T HAVE ENDED UP LIKE THIS!

THIS SHOULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED! NONE OF IT!

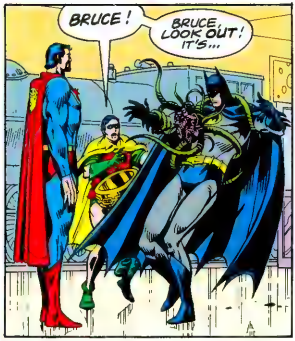
I WANT TO SEE MY MOTHER! I WANT TO SEE ORNA!

VAN? OH, MY SON, I'M LOSING YOU. PLEASE...

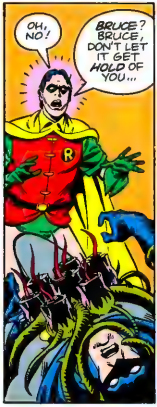
PLEASE JUST LET ME HOLD YOU ONCE MORE...

VAN!!

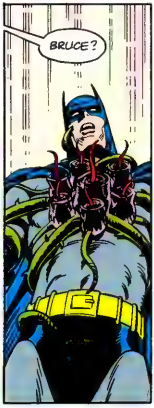
...OFF?


BRUCE!
BRUCE, LOOK OUT! IT'S...

THEY ARE IN THE DARK AND FAMILIAR STREETS OF OLD GOTHAM, WALKING HOME AFTER THE SHOW...
THERE IS THE SOUND OF HIS FATHER'S LAUGHTER, THE SMELL OF HIS MOTHER'S PERFUME...


OH, NO!
BRUCE? BRUCE, DON'T LET IT GET HOLD OF YOU...

...AND THEN THE MAN WITH THE WEASEL FACE STEPS FROM THE SHADOWS, CARRYING AN UGLY-LOOKING GUN...
...AND HE FIRES...


BRUCE?

...AND HE MISSES...
... AND THOMAS WAYNE TAKES THE GUN AWAY FROM HIM WITH NO TROUBLE AT ALL.

OH, NO. I CAN'T HANDLE THIS.
BRUCE! WAKE UP...

THE POLICE LEAD THE MAN AWAY AND THE CHILD IS SAFE IN HIS MOTHER'S ARMS.
THE DARK CLOUD OF TERROR THAT HAD FLAPPED SQUEAKING THROUGH HIS MIND BREAKS UP, DISPERSING FOREVER.
HE IS CONTENT.

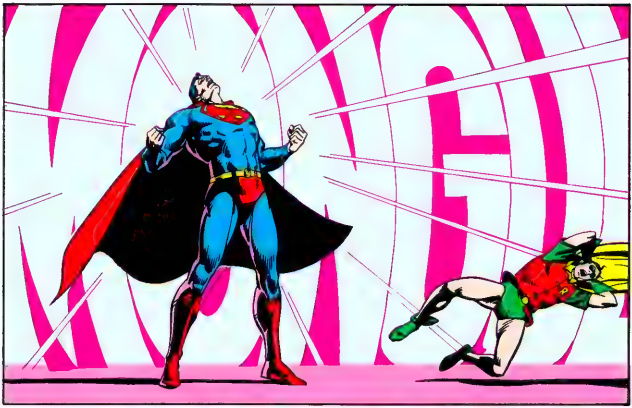
PLEASE PLEASE WAKE UP. I DON'T KNOW IF A HUMAN BODY CAN STAND CONTACT WITH THIS JUNK, EVEN IF IT DIDN'T DO ANY HARM TO...

...SUPERMAN.

WHO... DID THIS...TO ME?

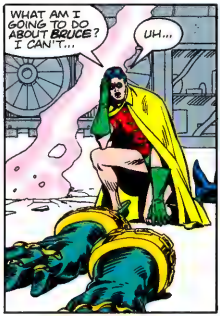
I...I DON'T KNOW.
A BIG YELLOW GUY. HE'S THROUGH THERE HURTING WONDER WOMAN NOW...
SUPERMAN? ARE YOU OKAY? YOU LOOK SORTA, UH...

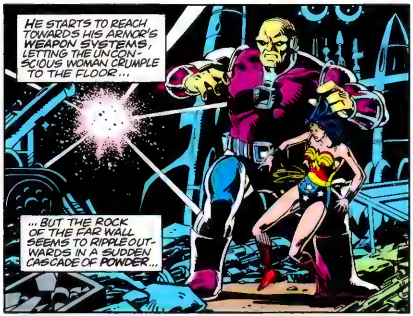
MONGUL...

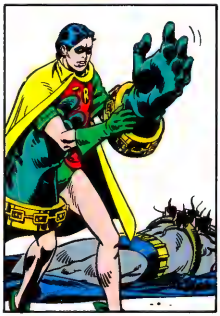


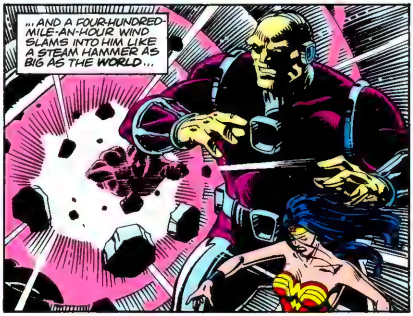
SUPERMAN! WAIT...
FFWOOSH

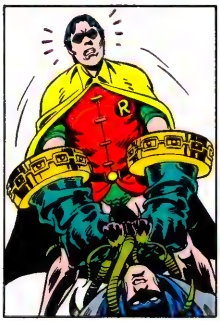
HE HEARS A VOICE LIKE ARMAGEDDON SHOUTING HIS NAME, AND HE STARTS TO TURN...
HE KNOWS HE HAS PERHAPS LESS THAN HALF A SECOND IN WHICH TO DEFEND HIMSELF...

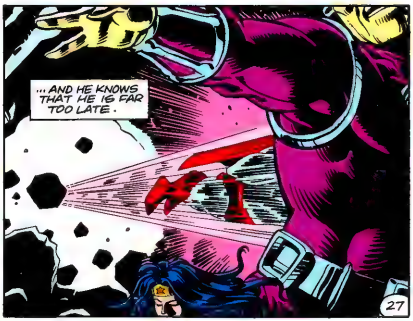

WHAT AM I GOING TO DO ABOUT BRUCE? I CAN'T...
UH...

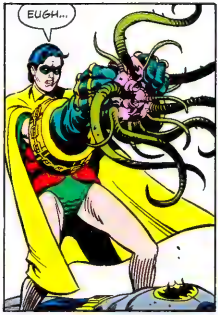

HE STARTS TO REACH TOWARDS HIS ARMOR'S WEAPON SYSTEMS, LETTING THE UNCONSCIOUS WOMAN CRUMPLE TO THE FLOOR...
...BUT THE ROCK OF THE FAR WALL SEEMS TO RIPPLE OUTWARDS IN A SUDDEN CASCADE OF POWDER...

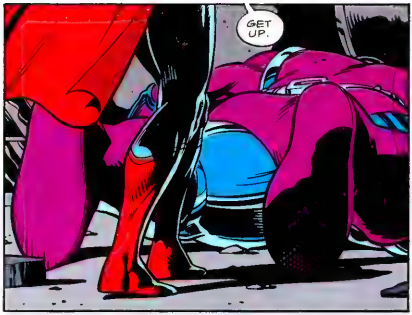


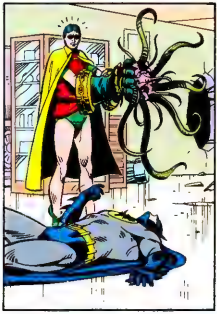

...AND A FOUR-HUNDRED-MILE-AN-HOUR WIND SLAMS INTO HIM LIKE A STEAM HAMMER AS BIG AS THE WORLD...

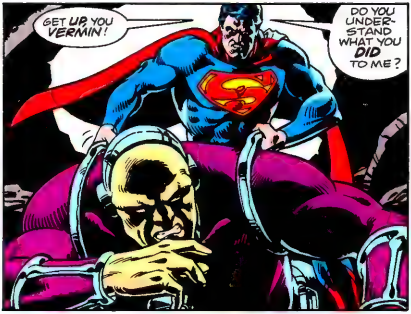


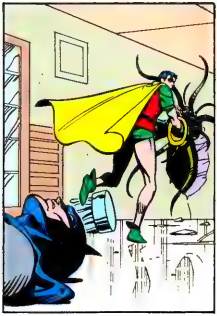

...AND HE KNOWS THAT HE IS FAR TOO LATE.

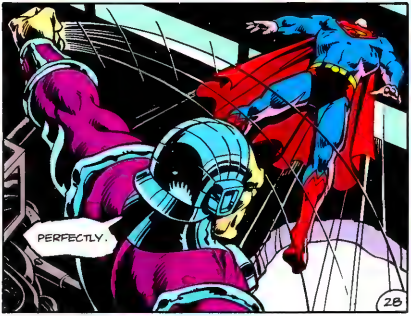

EUGH...

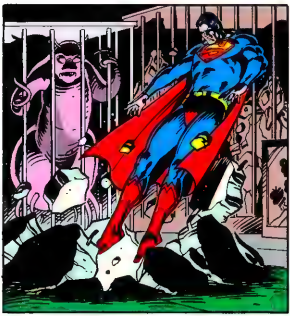

GET UP.

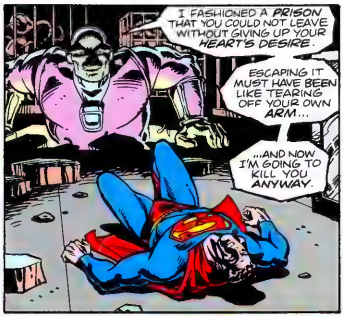



GET UP, YOU VERMIN!
DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU DID TO ME?




PERFECTLY.



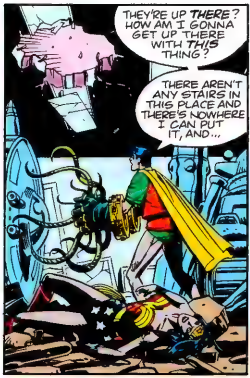

I FASHIONED A PRISON THAT YOU COULD NOT LEAVE WITHOUT GIVING UP YOUR HEART'S DESIRE.
ESCAPING IT MUST HAVE BEEN LIKE TEARING OFF YOUR OWN ARM...
...AND NOW I'M GOING TO KILL YOU ANYWAY.

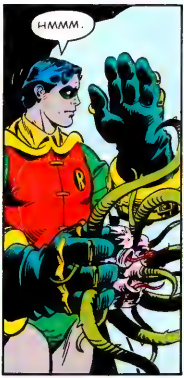
HAPPY BIRTHDAY KRYPTONIAN.
I GIVE YOU OBLIVION.

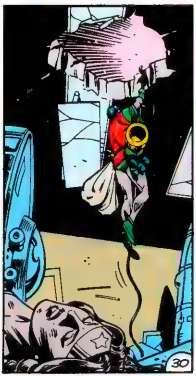
BURN.

SSSHIZZZZZIIT
AAAAAA

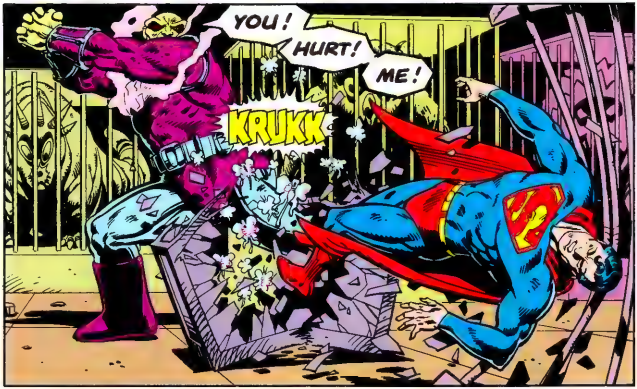
AAAAAAA


THEY'RE UP THERE? HOW AM I GONNA GET UP THERE WITH THIS THING?
THERE AREN'T ANY STAIRS IN THIS PLACE AND THERE'S NOWHERE I CAN PUT IT, AND...


HMMM.

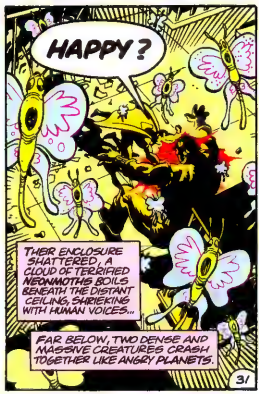


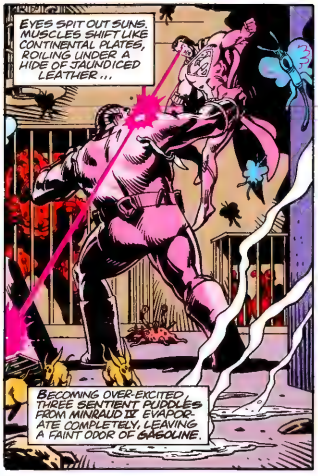
YOU... INSUFFERABLE ...LITTLE... SPECK...
YOU HURT ME.


YOU!
HURT!
ME!
KRUKK

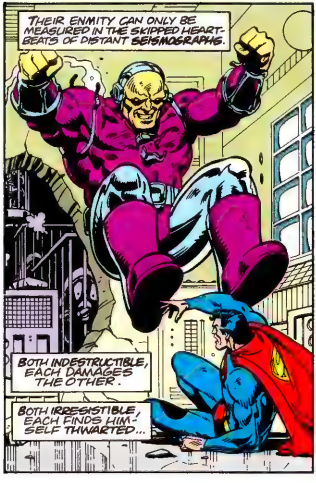
YOU SHOULD HAVE STAYED IN WHATEVER HAPPY FANTASY THE BLACK MERCY GRANTED YOU...

HAPPY?

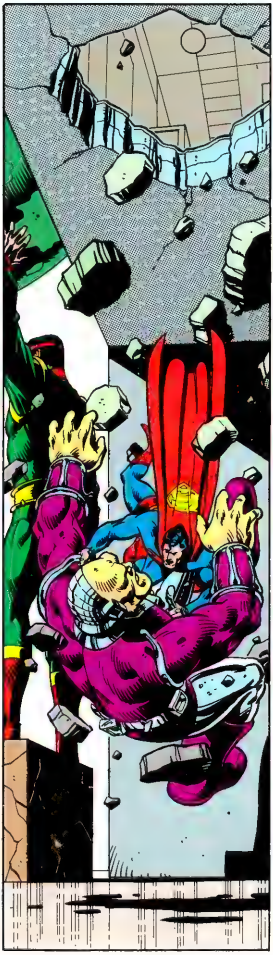

HAPPY?
THEIR ENCLOSURE SHATTERED, A CLOUD OF TERRIFIED NEONMOTHS BOILS BENEATH THE DISTANT CEILING, SHRIEKING WITH HUMAN VOICES...
FAR BELOW, TWO DENSE AND MASSIVE CREATURES CRASH TOGETHER LIKE ANGRY PLANETS.


EYES SPIT OUT SUNS. MUSCLES SHIFT LIKE CONTINENTAL PLATES, ROILING UNDER A HIDE OF JAUNDICED LEATHER...
BECOMING OVER-EXCITED THREE SENTIENT PUDDLES FROM MINDAUD II EVAPORATE COMPLETELY, LEAVING A FAINT ODOR OF GASOLINE.

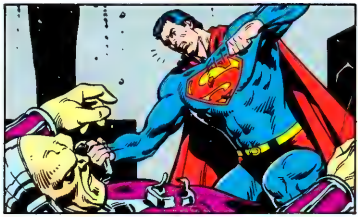
IN THE CHAMBER OF ARCHIVES, A MACHINE WITH A BRAIN MADE OF LIGHT IS COUNTING THE DISTANT PULSARS
WITHIN TEN FEET OF ITS ALGEBRAIC REVERIE, ALIEN ENGINES OF FURY GRIND TOGETHER UNNOTICED.


THEIR ENMITY CAN ONLY BE MEASURED IN THE SKIPPED HEARTBEATS OF DISTANT SEISMOGRAPHS.
BOTH INDESTRUCTIBLE, EACH DAMAGES THE OTHER.
BOTH IRRESISTIBLE, EACH FINDS HIMSELF THWARTED...

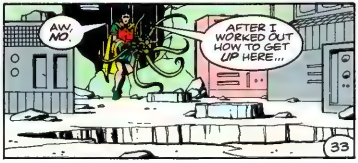
SURRENDER IS NOT A POSSIBILITY.

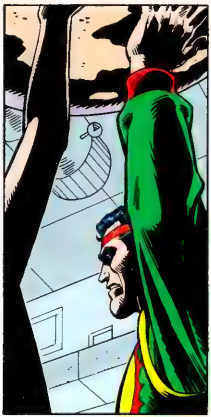


SUPERMAN?
YOU UP HERE?

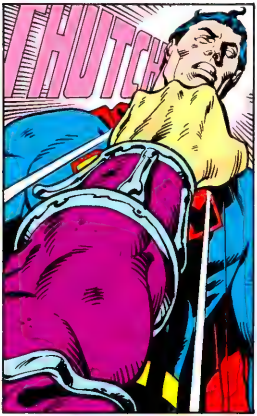


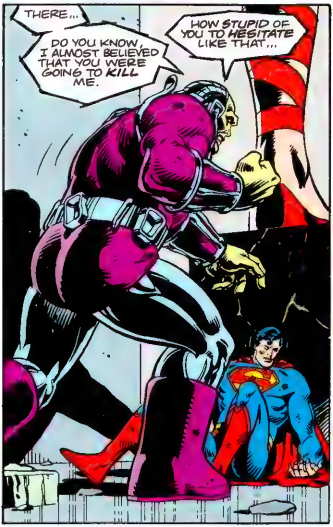
SUPERMAN?
UUURRRGH! GET OFF MY LEG, YOU LITTLE SLEAZE...
HEY, SUPERMAN?


AW, NO.
AFTER I WORKED OUT HOW TO GET UP HERE...

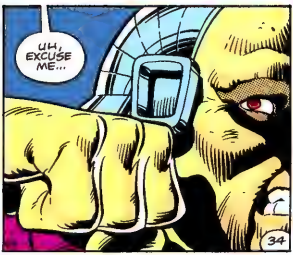


KRYPTON...?


THUTCH

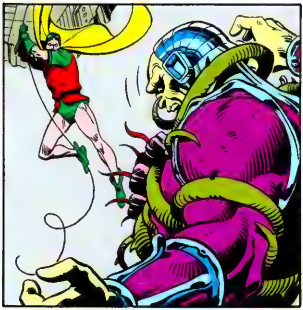

THERE...
DO YOU KNOW, I ALMOST BELIEVED THAT YOU WERE GOING TO KILL ME.
HOW STUPID OF YOU TO HESITATE LIKE THAT...

NOT A MISTAKE THAT I'LL MAKE, I ASSURE YOU...

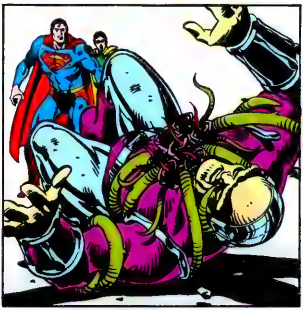

UH, EXCUSE ME...

...BUT I THINK THIS IS YOURS.
ALMOST INTELLIGENT, HUH?
AAAAAAA
35

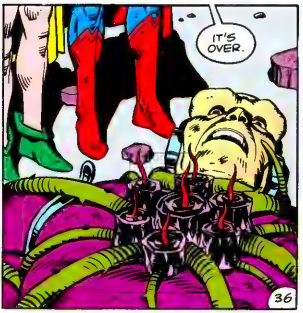
... AND HE SWATS THE THING ASIDE, REDUCING THE BOY TO ASH WITH THE TWITCH OF A CIRCUIT...

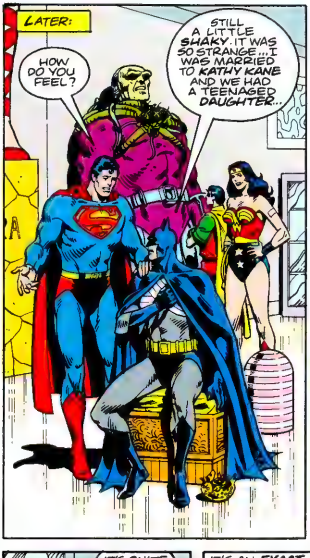


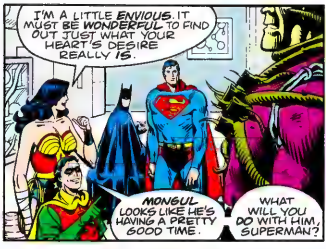
...AND THEN HE RIPS THE KRYPTONIAN'S HEAD FROM HIS SHOULDERS, LAUGHING AT THE WAY THAT THE EYES ROLL FOR LONG SECONDS AFTER DEATH...

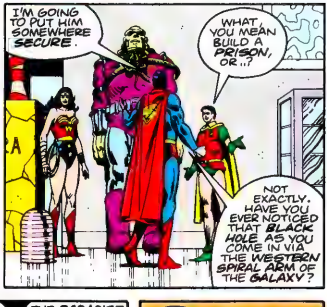


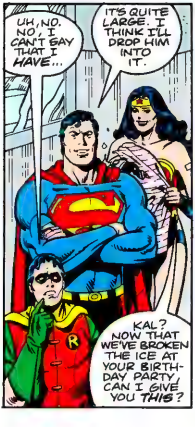
...AND THEN HE PLACES IT UPON A SPIKE AND GOES OUT TO TRAMPLE A WORLD, CARRYING IT BEFORE HIM, HIS HIDEOUS STANDARD.


IT'S OVER.


LATER:
HOW DO YOU FEEL?
STILL A LITTLE SHAKY. IT WAS SO STRANGE... I WAS MARRIED TO KATHY KANE AND WE HAD A TEENAGED DAUGHTER...


I'M A LITTLE ENVIOUS. IT MUST BE WONDERFUL TO FIND OUT JUST WHAT YOUR HEART'S DESIRE REALLY IS.
MONGUL LOOKS LIKE HE'S HAVING A PRETTY GOOD TIME.
WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH HIM, SUPERMAN?

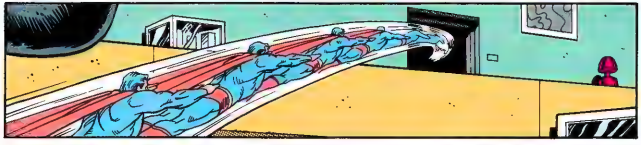

I'M GOING TO PUT HIM SOMEWHERE SECURE.
WHAT YOU MEAN BUILD A PRISON, OR...?
NOT EXACTLY. HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED THAT BLACK HOLE AS YOU COME IN VIA THE WESTERN SPIRAL ARM OF THE GALAXY?

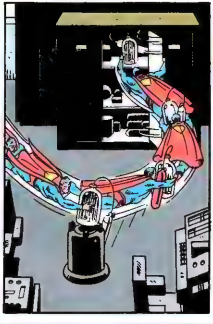

UH, NO. NO, I CAN'T SAY THAT I HAVE...
IT'S QUITE LARGE. I THINK I'LL DROP HIM INTO IT.
KAL? NOW THAT WE'VE BROKEN THE ICE AT YOUR BIRTHDAY PARTY, CAN I GIVE YOU THIS?

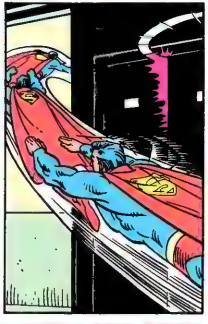
IT'S AN EXACT DUPLICATE OF THE BOTTLE CITY OF KANDOR, TO REPLACE THE REAL ONE, WHICH WAS ENLARGED.
THE PARADISE ISLAND GEM-SMITHS MADE IT. YOU NEED X-RAY AND MICROSCOPIC VISION TO REALLY APPRECIATE IT...

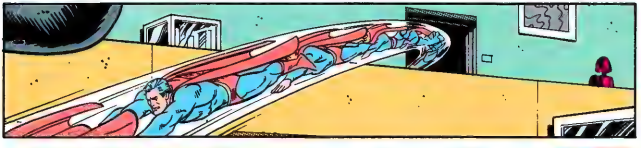
OH.
UH...
WHY, DIANA, THAT'S...

...JUST...



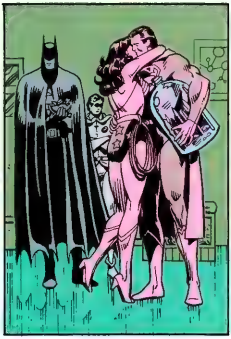




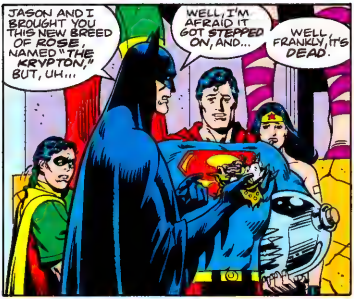


...JUST...

...WHAT I'VE ALWAYS WANTED.
I'M GLAD. YOU MUST HAVE MISSED THE OLD ONE.
HAPPY BIRTHDAY, KAL.

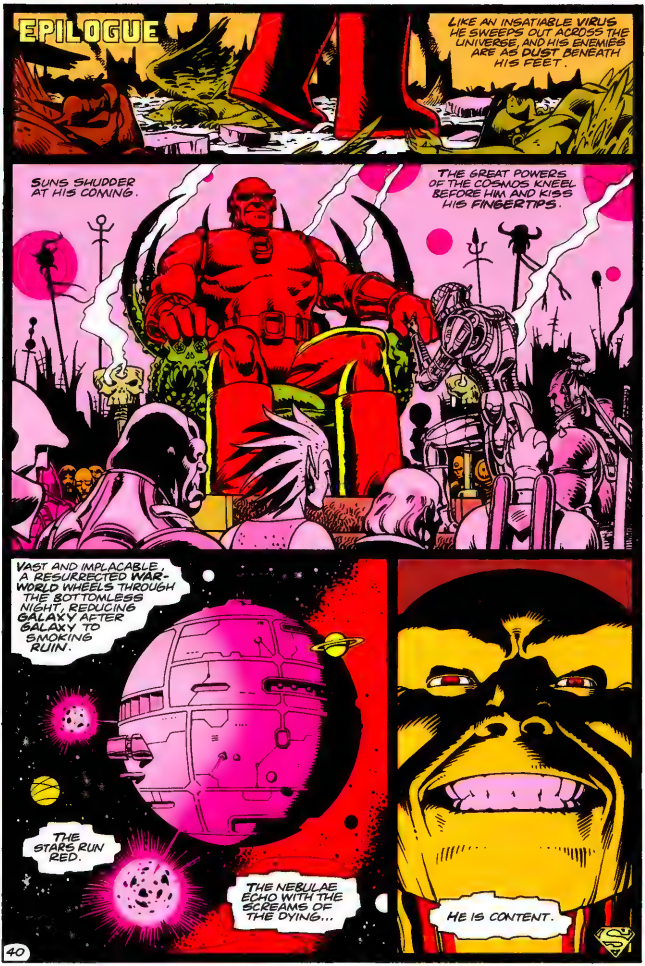


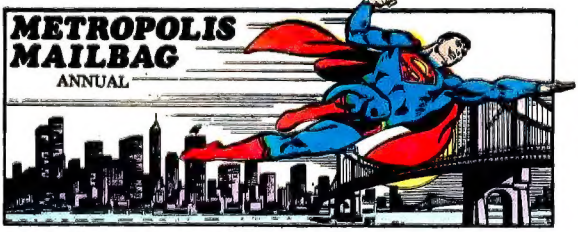
MMM. WHY DON'T WE DO THAT MORE OFTEN?
I DON'T KNOW. TOO PREDICTABLE?
YOU'RE PROBABLY RIGHT.


JASON AND I BROUGHT YOU THIS NEW BREED OF ROSE, NAMED "THE KRYPTON," BUT, UH...
WELL, I'M AFRAID IT GOT STEPPED ON, AND...
WELL, FRANKLY, IT'S DEAD.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, BRUCE.
PERHAPS IT'S FOR THE BEST.

COME ON...
DOES SOMEBODY WANT TO MAKE COFFEE WHILE I CLEAN THE PLACE UP?


EPILOGUE
LIKE AN INSATIABLE VIRUS HE SWEEPS OUT ACROSS THE UNIVERSE, AND HIS ENEMIES ARE AS DUST BENEATH HIS FEET.
SUNS SHUDDER AT HIS COMING.
THE GREAT POWERS OF THE COSMOS KNEEL BEFORE HIM AND KISS HIS FINGERTIPS.
VAST AND IMPLACABLE, A RESURRECTED WARWORLD WHEELS THROUGH THE BOTTOMLESS NIGHT, REDUCING GALAXY AFTER GALAXY TO SMOKING RUIN.
THE STARS RUN RED.
THE NEBULAE ECHO WITH THE SCREAMS OF THE DYING...
HE IS CONTENT.



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New York, NY 10103

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Dear Julie and Company,

What can I say? HOW CAN I SAY IT? Once again, Elliot S! Maggin has proven his mettle—he has demonstrated his own personal super-power! It is, albeit, a somewhat less physical manifest than those of the Man of Steel, but, in my mind, and no doubt in the minds of countless others, he has performed one of the most rare and benevolent super-feats of all: he has instilled in his readers the most magical of all experiences, a sense of wonder. By doing this he has enabled us once more to see the truly super-events which can and do take place right within every one of us: the very play of our own emotions, our own minds, the supreme magic of our very own consciousness. To Mr. Maggin, I can only say thank you.

To you, Julie, I can and will say a great deal more. The 1984 *SUPERMAN ANNUAL* #10 gave us *Superman* fans a vision of the kind of power a comic like *SUPERMAN* can have when it is handled properly. I, for one—who have been faithfully reading *Superman* for over 20 years—cannot understand the rationale for making the stories in his magazine shorter and more juvenile. This clearly seems to be what you are doing with the regular *ACTION* and *SUPERMAN* monthlies, under the guise of bringing the "fun" back into comics—a feat, I might add, that has been successfully accomplished in the *BLUE DEVIL*.

In novels, and special-edition type books such as annuals and anniversary issues, Elliot Maggin has shown us the incredible depth of his love for the *Superman* legend. When such talent and dedication is clearly evinced, and when the direction he takes with the stories and characters is unique and profound, how can you continue to publish the trifles which have been appearing in *ACTION* and *SUPERMAN* lately as the "direction" in which the books and characters should be going?

May I suggest that you get Mr. Maggin to take over the reins of at least one of the *Superman* titles? Perhaps he is too busy with other projects to take on regular scripting chores. If this is the case, please have him be the advisor and long-range planner for the regular series. As one of *Superman's* most loyal fans, I am almost ashamed to admit that I enjoy reading the *TEEN TITANS* more than the recent adventures of my longtime favorite. If Maggin were in charge, though, I have no doubt that *Superman* would once again soar to his rightful place as the mightiest hero of them all.

SITARAM
75 E. 190th St, Apt 1D
Bronx, NY 10468

Your ardent support for Elliot makes us wonder where you were when he was running for Congress last year. But seriously, Elliot's handling of the Man of Steel is, as you know, one of a number. For every letter like yours, we have others avidly in favor of the way Messrs. Bates, Kupperberg, et al handle Superman in our other magazines.—BR

*****

Dear Julie and Bob,

SUPERMAN ANNUAL #10 reminded me of the Weisinger era stories, which I started out on way back when. Many of those old books and stories were often constructed around some gimmick, some hook to grab the reader. Like this issue, often they were pretty improbable coincidences. I mean seriously, gang. A piece of matter from the "Big Bang," the origin of the universe, that JUST HAPPENED to be shaped like a sword, that JUST HAPPENED to have *Superman's* S insignia on the hilt, that JUST HAPPENED to fall into *Superman's* hands. That really is stretching things a bit. It probably would have made a pretty fast-paced and exciting 8-pager under Weisinger, but the 40-page annual seemed padded. Going on my memories of the Weisinger-era stories, the actual story started somewhere around page 11 and ended in the middle of page 36, when Mandias comes to himself again, and the whole sword would have ended up in the Fortress of Solitude. However, I felt the rest of these pages made this a better story, except for the first 3 pages, which really were superfluous padding. I really did enjoy the story.

As for the end, it's the Swanderson team. What can I say? "Swonderful, Smarvelous"!

JEF PECKHAM
730 Osage
Manhattan, KS 66502

I used to think that coincidences were far-fetched in stories until I started living through them. Like meeting someone I work with on a street corner in New York at a time when we both would normally be home. Or having someone come up to see me and finding out that we played high school football against one another twenty years ago!—BR

*****

Dear Julie and Bob,

Before I say anything about this year's *SUPERMAN ANNUAL*, let me first thank you for printing my letter about the last one. Now, onward to *SUPERMAN ANNUAL* 10! "The Day the Cheering Stopped" was just as good as, if not better than, last year's story. One reason was that we got a treat. We got to see the incredible team of Swan and Anderson working together again. I'd say that Murphy inks Swan better than anyone I know, but Oksner and DeCarlo coming in at a close second. Next, we saw an addition to the *Superman* legend ..."The Sword of Superman!" Third, and most important of all ... we got to see *Superman* take on King Kosmos by himself and win without any help!

DELMO WALTERS, JR.
1299 Grand Concourse
Bronx, NY 10452

*****

Dear Julie and Bob,

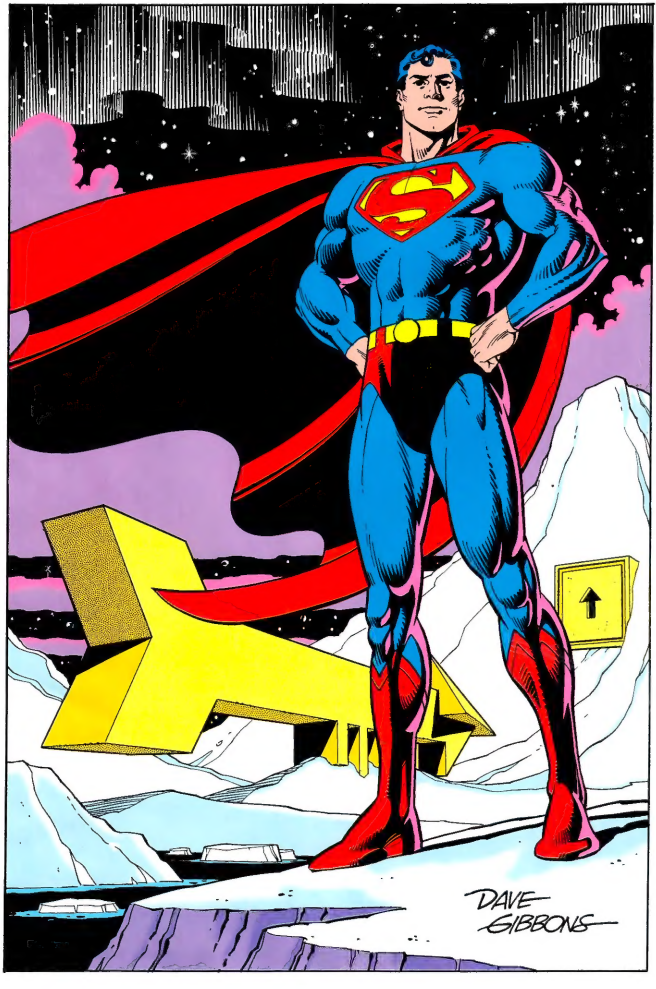
Once again Elliot S! Maggin showed his ability to add to the *Superman* legend and increase its universal appeal.

"The Day the Cheering Stopped" showcased three great *Superman* talents: Elliot, the "Legend-Maker"; Curt Swan, *Superman* artist supreme; and Murphy Anderson, the incredible artist-inker.

Elliot has a distinct feel for the *Superman* legend. In *SUPERMAN* #400, he showed us how the Man of Steel will be seen in the future, and now he shows us why *Su-per-man* is known by that name throughout known space. Another great story!

ANTHONY R. CARDNO
238 Center Drive
Mahopac, NY 10541

And on that note, we'll see you in next year's annual (and in the pages of SUPERMAN, ACTION COMICS, and DC COMICS PRESENTS every month). Till then, remember to "Look, up in the sky ...!"—Bob Rozakis


DAVE
GIBBONS

MEANWHILE...

Report from Your Man on the Road.

Part 1

Seems to me I'm always getting into a machine that moves and takes me somewhere. In the last 3 years I've covered over 85,000 miles on American Airlines alone. (I've also traveled on every other major airline ... and a few minor ones.) In addition, I cover something like 130-140 miles a day, each work day, on the Metro North Commuter Railroad. (See: **"Help! I'm Being Held Prisoner on Metro North..."** from an earlier column.) I also drive a bit.

It came as no particular surprise, then, that Sunday, January 13th, I found myself on a Connecticut Limo bus that took me to Laguardia Airport, where I boarded a flight that was to take me to Las Vegas. I won't bore you with the details of how I came to arrive at my destination, the Frontier Hotel, more than three hours later than originally scheduled. In my room a message was waiting that read, "Breakfast at 7:30 A.M. in the coffee shop," and was signed "Peggy." **7:30? Groan!** I was in bed and asleep in 20 minutes ... maybe 15.

Dawn came as dawn often does. I dragged my poor tired bones from bed (it's hard to age gracefully in this business) and got ready for the "breakfast" of last night's note. It was an important breakfast. **Bruce Bristow, DC's** Marketing Director; **Linda Robak**, our Sales Manager; **Peggy May, DC's** P.R., Conventions, and Personal Appearances Maven; and **Marv Wolfman**, of **TEEN TITANS** and **CRISIS** fame, waited for me at the table in the center of the coffee shop. They looked much better than I did. They had gotten in two days ago, while I had arrived only hours earlier. Anyway, how I looked (or felt) soon became moot. We were gathered to discuss our presentation that morning at the first session of the third annual Glenwood Distributors Meeting.

A few facts: Glenwood is a comic distributor that services comic specialty shops and other direct sales outlets around the country. Its chief honcho is **Russ Ernst**, who conceived the idea of meeting with some of his more committed retailers and representatives from all the publishing companies once a year to discuss—what else—comics. Russ and his retailers are all, of course, in the business of selling comics, but in the brisk dialogues that took place at lunch, which we took together, or in the hallways outside the rooms, it became evident that the majority (if not all) of them were informed comics fans as well. They knew what was happening in comics, **DC's** and others, and were anxious to share their opinions, concerns, and frustrations with us. I attended this meeting last year and got a lot out of it. I asked Marv Wolfman to join us this year because the time of this meeting coincided very closely with the release of **CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS** #1, a very important DC maxi-series for 1985, and I wanted Marv to talk to the retailers about his/our plans for the series and give them some insights into future events. (Marv gave them a sneak peek at the cover to **CRISIS** #7, drawn by George Pérez ... and it knocked their socks off! Mine, too. I hadn't seen it before then.) I also knew that Marv would get a lot of feedback from those retailers, who are closer to our readers than anybody else we are likely to meet during the year (except at conventions, where readers are present but often don't give us the feedback that leads to improvement of our comics). Anyway, by the time Marv and I left Las Vegas on Tuesday evening for San Francisco (full details on that junket next week), we both agreed that we had a pretty good time and got a good deal of information and some helpful tips on how to make things work better for the retailers and you, their friends and customers. Most of the ideas on the upcoming **CRISIS** series itself have already been implemented and should increase your enjoyment of our 50th Anniversary Celebration and the universe-shattering events in the **CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS** maxi-series.

In closing, I'd like to express my thanks and appreciation to Russ Ernst for being far-sighted enough to recognize the enormous value of meetings of this sort and taking the time to organize them. I'd also like to encourage other distributors to take a hard look at the advantages of nose-to-nose dialogues with the people you deal with every day.

Good show, Russ! See you next year, I hope.

Thank you and good afternoon.

Dick

P.S. Special thanks to: Steve Gerber, Mike Friedrich, Jan Strnad, and Cat Yronwode, with whom I had long and interesting chats that lead to an improvement in the quality of my life.

D

DC CHECK LIST

ON SALE THE WEEK OF JUNE 20

☐ **Batman and the Outsiders 25:** Kobra enlists Halo in his effort to destroy the Outsiders!

☐ **Green Lantern 192:** The return of Star Sapphire and the end of Carol Ferris!

☐ **Sgt. Rock 404:** In a war, it isn't only the enemy who can kill you!

☐ **Warlord 97:** Morgan assembles all his forces and storms Shamballa!

☐ **Blue Devil 16:** It's Cassidy vs. Vanquisher with Marla caught in the middle!

☐ **Who's Who 7:** Element Lad, Elongated Man, Dr. 13, Easy Co., Enemy Ace, and Eclipso, plus more!

☐ **Hex 1:** Jonah is sent to a far-flung future and may never go home!

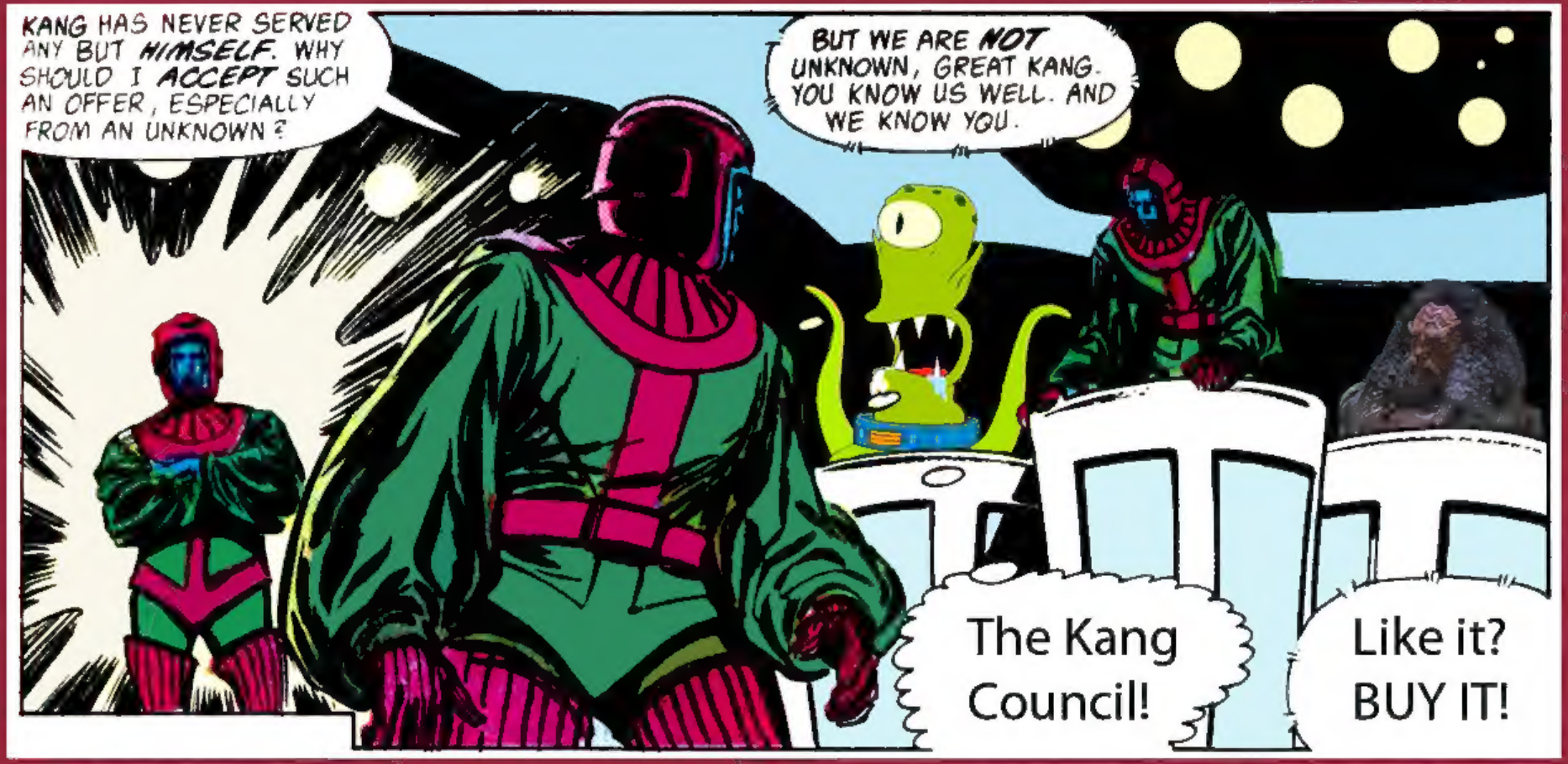
☐ **Superman Annual 11:** Superman vs. Monghul, plus Batman, Robin, and Wonder Woman!

☐ **Infinity, Inc. 18:** The Infinitors vs. Helix in the fight to end all fights!

☐ **New Teen Titans 12:** After the past few battles, the Titans take a break—or so they think!

☐ **Saga of the Swamp Thing 40:** The bloodiest stop in Swampy's journey, and werewolves too!

MINUTEMEN


KANG HAS NEVER SERVED ANY BUT HIMSELF. WHY SHOULD I ACCEPT SUCH AN OFFER, ESPECIALLY FROM AN UNKNOWN?
BUT WE ARE NOT UNKNOWN, GREAT KANG. YOU KNOW US WELL. AND WE KNOW YOU.
The Kang Council!
Like it? BUY IT!